

2 Chronicles 35 – Thursday, May 18th, 2017

2 Chronicles 35 -- 1 Now Josiah kept a Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the first month. 2 And he set the priests in their duties and encouraged them for the service of the house of the LORD.

- The chapter begins with Josiah continuing to bring reform to Israel by keeping of the feast of Passover on the appropriate day.
- However, he has a problem in the sense that there is so much work that has to be done, starting with encouraging the priests.
- This because, Josiah didn't want anyone serving and celebrating the Passover with the wrong spirit and attitude of the heart.

Charles Spurgeon - "The first thing is to get every man into his proper place; the next thing is for every man to have a good spirit in his present place, so as to occupy it worthily."

3 Then he said to the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to the LORD: "Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built. It shall no longer be a burden on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and His people Israel. 4 Prepare yourselves according to your fathers' houses, according to your divisions, following the written instruction of David king of Israel and the written instruction of Solomon his son. 5 And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of your brethren the lay people, and according to the division of the father's house of the Levites. 6 So slaughter the Passover offerings, consecrate yourselves, and prepare them for your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses."

- Here we're told that the Holy Ark needed to be put back where it belonged, which was in the holy of holies there in the temple.
- This was yet another problem, such that, it would be an indication that the previous evil kings had removed it from the temple.
- This should come as no surprise given that they had also removed and even hid the Word of God replacing it with false gods.

7 Then Josiah gave the lay people lambs and young goats from the flock, all for Passover offerings for all who were present, to the number of thirty thousand, as well as three thousand cattle; these were from the king's possessions.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons chiefly because Josiah is giving them every reason to do this and no reason not to.
- In other words, he's giving the lay people the lambs and goats from his own flocks so they can celebrate the Feast of Passover.
- This is what good leaders do in the sense that they provide an environment that is conducive to serving and worshipping God.

8 And his leaders gave willingly to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave to the priests for the Passover offerings two thousand six hundred from the flock, and three hundred cattle. 9 Also Conaniah, his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, chief of the Levites, gave to the Levites for Passover offerings five thousand from the flock and five hundred cattle.

- This is what I call contagious generosity on the part of the leaders who respond to Josiah's giving by also giving themselves.
- It seems Josiah's example as their king had a tremendous impact on them, so much so, that they would respond accordingly.
- While this certainly applies to the example of a pastor like myself, so too does it apply to those who are in leadership positions.

10 So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their places, and the Levites in their divisions, according to the king's command. 11 And they slaughtered the Passover offerings; and the priests sprinkled the blood with their hands, while the Levites skinned the animals. 12 Then they removed the burnt offerings that they might give them to the divisions of the fathers' houses of the lay people, to offer to the LORD, as it is written in the Book of Moses. And so they did with the cattle. 13 Also they roasted the Passover offerings with fire according to the ordinance; but the other holy offerings they boiled in pots, in caldrons, and in pans, and divided them quickly among all the lay people. 14 Then afterward they prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the sons of Aaron, were busy in offering burnt offerings and fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, the sons of Aaron.

- This is one of those places in God's Word where we're provided with seemingly graphic detail, which requires a closer look.
- Specifically as it relates to the slaughtering and skinning of the animal sacrifices as well as the priests sprinkling the blood.
- The question becomes one of why this detail would rise to the level of being important enough for the chronicler to record.

- Perhaps it goes without saying, but the reason for such graphic detail, especially concerning the slaughtering points to Jesus.
- Everything they did in preparation and celebration of the Passover Feast pointed to the person of Jesus Christ and the cross.
- Actually, this is what the Old Testament is all about. It's all about the finished work of Jesus Christ Who fulfilled the Passover.

15 And the singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their places, according to the command of David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer. Also the gatekeepers were at each gate; they did not have to leave their position, because their brethren the Levites prepared portions for them. 16 So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the Passover and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, according to the command of King Josiah. 17 And the children of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days.

- It's interesting to note that having singers lead in worship as a part of the Passover celebration was never commanded by God.
- The reason I point this out is because it speaks to how Josiah in his zeal for the Lord, goes above and beyond to worship God.
- Sadly, as we're about to see, it would be this very zeal that ends up being misguided, will lead to the downfall of this great king.

18 There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 19 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this Passover was kept.

- Here again the chronicler provides us with an important detail about Passover being unlike any ever kept since Samuel's days.
- Not even during the reign of Solomon or his father King David before him had their ever been a Passover celebration like this.
- The reason I mention this is because it speaks to the importance of preparation and hard work to have success in the ministry.

F.B. Meyer of this wrote, "Josiah's Passover was so vast and rare a success because of the large amount of previous preparation, as is described in this chapter."

20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him. 21 But he sent messengers to him, saying, "What have I to do with you, king of Judah? I have not come against you this day, but against the house with which I have war; for God commanded me to make haste. Refrain from meddling with God, who is with me, lest He destroy you."

- This is where Josiah' misguided zeal will lead to his tragic downfall as a good king who in the end falters and sins against God.
- It's worthy of noting that King Necho of Egypt was actually right about God being with him in his warning Josiah not to meddle.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest that Josiah's sin against God came by way of his actually supporting the Assyrian Empire.

G. Campbell Morgan explained it this way, "Josiah was in sin because his attack against Egypt was in support of the Assyrian Empire, and he had no business supporting the Assyrian Empire. "The only reason for doing so must have been some supposed political advantage. Against that kind of action the prophets were constantly warning the kings. A word claiming to be from God, forbidding what was already forbidden, had a weight of moral appeal almost amounting to certainty."

22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself so that he might fight with him, and did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God. So he came to fight in the Valley of Megiddo.

- One has to wonder why it is that Josiah as great of a king as he was, wouldn't take heed to this warning from the Egyptian king.
- I'm of the belief that there are two reasons that might explain this, and as such, they become the take away from this passage.
- First, notice how that conspicuously absent from the narrative is any mention of king Josiah ever seeking the Lord in prayer.

- The lesson here becomes quite clear in that had he but prayed and sought the Lord concerning this he may not have done this.
- Would to God that we would take everything to him in prayer like the hymn of old, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," declares.
- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment as I share with you the words to this timeless classic as I think it would be apropos.

- What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear, And what a privilege to carry, Everything to God in prayer
- Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry, Everything to God in prayer
- Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged, Take it to the Lord in prayer
- Can we find a friend so faithful, Who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness, Take it to the Lord in prayer

- The second reason I believe Josiah didn't heed to this warning from the Egyptian king is because he was the Egyptian king.
- In other words, Josiah was dismissive of it by virtue of the fact that the warning came from an Egyptian and not God's prophet.
- One of the things I'm learning in my walk with the Lord is often times God will speak to me through the most unlikely sources.

G. Campbell Morgan - Such a story must, to say the least, give us pause, and make us enquire as to how far we are ever justified in refusing to consider a word which is claimed as a divine message, even when it comes from sources from which we should least expect to receive it."

23 And the archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am severely wounded." 24 His servants therefore took him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had, and they brought him to Jerusalem. So he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. 25 Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments. 26 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his goodness, according to what was written in the Law of the LORD, 27 and his deeds from first to last, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

- The chapter ends with the tragic end of what was arguably one of the greatest kings as the last good king in the Israel's history.
- Every king from here on out as we'll see next week, Lord willing, in the last chapter of 2 Chronicles did evil in the Lord's sight.
- Be that as it may, it is interesting to note in conclusion, while Josiah was loved very much as a king, Israel will turn from God.

I'll close with G. Campbell Morgan again, as I think it sums it up best this way, "Josiah had evidently made himself greatly beloved by them, and the probability is that the reforms he instituted were based on that love rather than on the people's real return to devotion to God."